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Evolutionary Transhumanism in the Context of Philosophical Anthropology

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Evolutionary Transhumanism in the Context of Philosophical Anthropology[1]

Ewolucyjny transhumanizm w kontekście antropologii filozoficznej

ABSTRACT

The author of the article considers the human condition within the frame-work of technological advances. He justifies the conception of the Enlightenment as an ideology legitimizing the transition from the human being to a "neo-human being." The basic theses of evolutionary transhumanism are offered and analysed as a mind-set model for the epoch of cybernetic revolution. The main subject of the first section is the concept of "ideology." It will be discussed with regard to the opposition between Enlightenment and Anti-Enlightenment and finally formulated as a way of maturing that transgresses the traditional definition of ideology as a "style of thought" (*Denkstil*). In the second section, transhumanism will be introduced as an ideological concept in reference to "Evolution 2045" and "Russia 2045" founded by Dmitry Itskov. On this basis the author will demonstrate that the content of the transhumanistic ideology corresponds to the Platonic concept of technique and therefore pursues a noble ethical purpose.

Articles and Dissertations

ABSTRAKT

Autor artykułu rozważa kondycję ludzką w kontekście postępów technologicznych. Uzasadnia koncepcję oświecenia jako ideologii legitymizującej przejście od istoty ludzkiej do istoty neoludzkiej. Podstawowe tezy transhumanizmu ewolucyjnego zostaną zaproponowane i przeanalizowane w postaci modelu stanu umysłowego odpowiedniego dla epoki rewolucji cybernetycznej. Główny temat pierwszej części stanowi koncepcja „ideologii". Będzie ona analizowana w kontekście opozycji między oświeceniem a antyoświeceniem oraz zostanie docelowo ujęta jako droga dojrzewania, która przekracza tradycyjne definicje ideologii jako „stylu myślenia" (*Denkstil*). W drugiej części transhumanizm zostanie przedstawiony jako koncept ideologiczny w odniesieniu do inicjatyw „Evolution 2045" oraz „Russia 2045" założonych przez Dmitrija Itskova. Na tej podstawie autor pokaże, iż przekaz ideologii transhumanistycznej odpowiada platońskiemu pojęciu techniki i w związku z tym dąży do szlachetnych celów etycznych.

Introduction

Questions concerning the human condition are the most difficult philosophical questions. Traditional approaches to the discussion have used the versions of "What exists?" or "What does 'existence' mean?"—meaning, in the general sense, a resetting of monism, dualism and pluralism versions of ontology. In the 20th century, the development of the philosophy of science and philosophical knowledge in general convincingly showed the insufficiency of both the monist and dualist approaches: the evident problems of naïve materialism and naïve idealism, the problem of verification for general concepts, the conflict of physicalism and functionalism in discussing psychophysical unity, etc. Pluralism, however, is the study of multiple substances, popularised by Karl Popper within history and philosophy of science. On the one hand, it helps to take into account a number of definitions of object existence, which are incompatible for monism and dualism; on the other hand, it helps to understand the subject, i.e. human cognition, communication and activity as the way of interaction of different substances, media and worlds.

Within the scope of humanities and science, the technological development of the 21st century means that technological applications

are not simply objects of human environments, they deal with humans, their body and consciousness. It is the challenge for the philosophy of science to reconsider the traditional arguments and offer a new answer to the questions of "Who am I?" and "What does it mean to be 'me'?" The basic premise of philosophical speculation about the human being in the epoch of transhumanism is the statement that a number of traditional ontological models offer only a context or background for performing the drama of human self-consciousness; the text itself is created by ideologies, ways of constructing the "I"— mechanisms of goal setting and achieving these goals.

The Anti-humanistic crisis as a result of the Anti-Enlightenment

Within the scope of anthropology, reflection is the fundamental feature of a human, revealing itself as the ability to understand one's own ignorance and formulate questions, one's own finiteness and find ways to overcome this with the help of art, technology, religion, science and philosophy and to be free and control oneself. A reflecting human is a creature able to fix and overcome the boundaries of a biological and mind-set character.

On the one hand, humans overcome the boundaries of their biological determination during their lifespan by integrating into society and becoming social subjects. The first experience of such overcoming takes place in early childhood and is connected with acquiring communication skills. When a human is born, he/she has a number of reflexes allowing the body to breathe, provoke blood circulation, digest food, etc. However, no one is born with the ability to speak: everyone must make the effort to develop appropriate reflexes, which are not innate but vitally important for socialising. In addition, during their lifespan humans formulate and overcome mind-set boundaries, which constitute the ground for his/her self-identification in society. The self-consciousness of an individual or the answer to the question "Who am I?" becomes possible owing to the sum of acquired skills or languages.[2] After overcoming biological determination, acquir-

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[2] The term "language" is taken in the broad meaning including language of be-haviour, gestures, languages of culture. Language in the full semiotic meaning of the term is any inter-subjective combination of signs, the usage of which

ing and testing skills and mechanisms of communication in society, a human gives individual meaning to the sum of notions, which he obtained in the process of mastering the language. Metaphysical notions are the most significant within this sum. These are the notions of which the content cannot be reduced to perception experience and cannot be inferred from it. These are the notions of God, death, love, honour, freedom, etc. Their content must be reconstructed and acknowledged by each individual during their lifespan and hence one's mind-set gives meaning to metaphysical notions.

In possessing a mind-set, a human has the ability to overcome biological boundaries. Mind-set transformations, changes in points of view or the evolution of individual consciousness during adolescence is the evidence of a human's ability to overcome various mind-sets, ideological and social boundaries. A human, while acquiring the skills of using languages, discovers the systems of meanings within their structure, determined by history and presented in the ways of using the signs by society. By acquiring these meanings and positioning oneself within them, a human gains the possibility of self-identification. Historically determined combinations of meanings in languages used in society are the basis for manifold ideologies containing anthropological and political dimensions.

Ideology in the anthropological dimension is a set of magisterial plots of culture, which are comprehensible for a human, as well as an intellectual (semiotic) space of reflection, helping to answer the questions "Who am I?," "What is this world like?" and "Why do I live?" In other words, to solve the most general life-sense problems, learn about oneself, integrate into society, understand and set communicative tasks, be rational, perform (self)control and (self)management functions within the frame of social consciousness and solve survival problems, forming the logic for practical actions dealing with the "I", society and the world as a whole. Ideology in the political dimension is the practically realised system of social interaction, where a human and infrastructure of the system (institutes of the state and society) are its subjects.

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is determined by syntactic, semantic and pragmatic rules. Ch.W. Morris, *Foundations of the Theory of Signs. Semiotics: Anthology*, Chicago 1938. In Russian: Ч.У., Моррис, *Основания теории знаков. Семиотика: Антология*, ed. Ю.С. Степанов, Екатеринбург 2001.

In the anthropological dimension, the procedure of reflection, which helps to differentiate between a human and an animal, is always realised as the choice between ideologies, as taking one and rejecting another one. As a rule, in evolution of self-consciousness, a human makes the transition from an empirical way of understanding oneself to idealistic or realistic ways. Empiricism presupposes that a human is what is observed in him/her. Idealism presupposes that a human is the way of performing observation (in receptive and projective meanings). In realism, a human is the synthesis of what is observed in him/her and the way of observation.

In technical terms: empiricism in the field of self-cognition refers to the practice of dealing with, understanding and creating objects. The answer to the question concerning the essence of a human demands the creation of a human image and, consequently, an anthropomorphic (humanistic) image of the world. The idealistic concept of self-understanding presupposes the practice of working with the rules, their revelation and realisation. A human is presented as a machine, conforming to rules, an up-to-date or a potential sum of dehumanised techniques in a non-anthropomorphic environment. Realism ultimately refers to the correlation of working practices with an object and working practices with the rules, i.e. it involves a pragmatic level of analysis in the discussion. The human is presented here as the subject, determined by an evolutionally transforming set of pragmatic skills, allowing the correlation of various rules and objects. This subject is able to justify the necessity of the choice of definite pragmatics for different conditions. On the whole, the evolution of culture (culture is treated as all forms of intellectual activity of a human) is the moving toward a realist understanding and self-understanding of a human, synthesising the foundations and techniques of empiricism and idealism.

In the political dimension, ideology is the way of controlling[3] an individual within the frame of society or the state, defining the way of organising. Since a human possessing the ability to reflect

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[3] "Control can be characterized as transforming and heading activity, performed by the subject in relation to the object of control, which results in achieving the aim." V.S. Diev, "Risk Control: Methodology and Values", *Bulletin of Novosibirsk State University. Section: Philosophy* 2007, vol. 5(2). In Russian: В.С. Диев, "Управление риском: методологические и ценностные аспекты", *Вестник Новосибирского государственного университета. Серия: Философия* 2007, vol. 5(2), p. 93.

is free[4], social control is organised by facilitating the procedures of human self-understanding or by managing or even suppressing them. That is the opposition of Enlightenment and Anti-enlightenment, formulated in the variant of life aims for an individual, which are determined by society. The 20th century was the arena for a struggle between Enlightenment and Anti-enlightenment ideologies. On the one hand, the beginning and the first half of the century were accompanied by immense growth of positive knowledge: the pathos of the Enlightenment appeared in public performances of representatives of physics, biology, mathematics and engineering sciences—from Nikola Tesla until Alan Turing. On the other hand, during this century, philosophic (metaphysic) knowledge, or inheriting philosophies of life, found itself in the situation of unsolved crisis: from Hugo von Hofmannsthal's manifesting language's loss of expressing ability, through Albert Camus defining cognition as absurd, to modern postmodernism manifesting the impossibility of objective science knowledge that became tangled in terms and simulacra.

Today, the ideology of the Anti-enlightenment is common for the development of our civilisation. Crises of modern society—ecological, economic, politic and cultural ones—are the consequence of a deep spiritual crisis which humans provoked in the second half of the 20th century. According to Fritz Heinemann, philosophy of life is tantamount to "life protesting against spirit,"[5] that is, the rejection of self-consciousness, which in fact leads to animalistic levels of existence. Since the science of nature is a small part of the science about spirit, in which "the human eliminates itself in order to construct out of his own impressions this great object of nature, understood as an

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[4] Freedom is treated in the meaning of Georg W.F. Hegel as attitude to oneself. See G.W.F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, Moscow 1974–1977. In Russian: Г.В.Ф., Гегель, *Энциклопедия философских наук*, vol. 1: *Наука логики*, Москва 1974–1977, p. 120. "Defining the spirit is defining its laws. But these are not external natural determinations; the only definition of it, which contains all other definitions, is its freedom." G.W.F. Hegel, "Philosophische Propädeutik", in: G.W.F. Hegel, *Works of Different Periods: In 2 Volumes*, vol. 2, Moscow 1971. In Russian: Г.В.Ф. Гегель, "Философская пропедевтика", in: Г.В.Ф. Гегель, *Работы разных лет в двух томах*, vol. 2, Москва 1971, p. 197.

[5] F. Heinemann, *Neue Wege der Philosophie. Geist/Leben/Existenz. Eine Einführung in die Philosophie der Gegenwart*, Leipzig 1929, p. 157.

order complying to principles,"[6] humanity is on the verge of destruction in the 21st century.

The urge to act as an animal rather than a human is a special feature of the Anti-enlightenment mind-set. Modern mass consciousness urges us not to overcome boundaries of biological determination, not to overpass the limits of narrow individual mind-set created by close environment, but to ignore cultural heredity and to act in accordance with animal instincts. It is evident that the spread of such a mind-set and ideology will lead to the collapse of the civilisation of *Homo sapiens*.

The aim of the philosopher in the situation described above is to formulate the ideology of New Enlightenment, to show its foundations and resources, to formulate the requirements for self-consciousness of the individual and requirements for serving the state and society. We are sure that the ideology of transhumanism, formulated by Dmitry Itskov is suitable for that.[7]

Transhumanism as a return of the ideological roots of Enlightenment

The term transhumanism is derived from the adjective "transhuman"[8], which was introduced into the English language by Henry Francis Cary, the translator of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. This term now means the series of mind-sets connected with improving

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[6]   In the German original: "Alle dieser Momente wirken dahin zusammen, daß der Mensch sich selbst ausschaltet, um aus seinen Eindrücken diesen großen Gegenstand Natur als eine Ordnung nach Gesetzen zu konstruieren." W. Dilthey, *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*, Frankfurt am Main 1981, p. 93.

[7]   "'Evolution2045'—the Party of Intellectual, Technological and Spiritual Breakthrough. Manifesto". In Russian: "'Эволюция 2045'—партия интеллектуального, технологического и духовного прорыва. Манифест", <http://evolution.2045.ru> (access: 6.12.2016); D.I. Itskov, "Futurism, Cosmism and Russian Expansion". In Russian: Д.И. Ицков, "Футуризм, космизм и русская экспансия", <http://vz.ru/opinions/2012/10/9/601701.html> (access: 6.12.2016).

[8]   A. Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, Paradiso, Canto I, 68. Available at: <http://www.divinecomedy.org/divine_comedy.html> (access: 6.12.2016); O. Krüger, *Virtualität und Unsterblichkeit. Die Visionen des Posthumanismus*, Freiburg im Breisgau 2004, pp. 109–110ff.

biological characteristics of a human by means of technological progress. "Transhumanism" means the analysis of human boundaries in natural science, moral and aesthetic dimensions with the aim to discover ways of their overcoming. In ontological meaning, transhumanism is defined by the urge to find the productive model of describing and transforming a human by means of modern science, which leads to the dialogue with traditional confessions and natural science materialism. In the gnoseological sense, there is the task to expand the spectrum of human cognition and the demand to understand evolutionary mechanisms, to develop the theory and methodology of human transformation. In axiological terms, there is the task to understand the new system of values and existential meanings, and the demand for advanced ethics of post-singular stage of civilisation development. In praxeological terms, there appears the need to create the social subject capable of realising transhuman system of values.[9]

In the literature on transhumanism, this approach is often considered as a means of setting goals for technological realisation, which can lead to the development of neo-human, post-human, god-human, cyber-human or super-human: "Posthumanism formulates the aim and transhumanism formulates the way."[10] European philosophy prefers to use the prefix "post" while defining the aims of evolutionary development of a human, whereas classic Russian religious philosophy prefer the prefix "god" and modern Russian thinkers use the prefix "neo-". David Dubrovski signifies the inconsistency of interpreting perspectives of transhuman transformations as the transition to posthuman, i.e. to some dehumanised creature without any fundamental values. This is going to be a neo-human, but not a posthuman because his/her consciousness will retain the main values of kindness, beauty, truth, justice, love, art and spiritual development. Retaining basic meanings, they will form new, existentially important content.[11]

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[9] Defining the aims and conceptual tasks of transhuman movement, we base on publications of strategic social movement "Russia 2045". See: <http://2045.ru> (access: 6.12.2016).

[10] O. Krüger, *Virtualität und Unsterblichkeit. Die Visionen des Posthumanismus*, op. cit., p. 112.

[11] "'Russia 2045' submitted the program to Russian Academy of Sciences Board on AI methodology". In Russian: "'Россия 2045' представила свою программу Научному совету РАН по методологии искусственного интеллекта", <http://2045.ru/articles/30803.html> (access: 6.12.2016).

Transhumanism in the Russian variant demands from the philosopher a serious analysis and prognosis based on a clear methodology; it does not deal with changes in meaning of trivial notions and wordplay for feuilleton glory. Evolutionary transhumanism is the ideology determined by the demand for realistic self-consciousness of a human in the anthropological dimension, the demand for the state serving society and humans in the political dimension. Basic principles of evolutionary transhumanism are: highly developed spirit, culture, ethics and technologies.

One of the most difficult questions in both the mind-set and scientific spheres is the question about evolution or development. Transhumanism demands an "external" view of a human: goal setting in which his/her body and consciousness condition is considered as transitional, incomplete and open to change. The problem of the evolution of consciousness and the body can be formulated in a series of questions, each of them giving corresponding content for the notion "evolution."[12] The first question deals with the revelation of new syntax rules for a certain consciousness function without changes in conditions for its possibility and the substrate of realisation. The second question deals with changes in conditions of possibilities and a substrate for a definite function. The third question deals with appearance, working out and opening new conditions of possibilities and new substrates for implementing consciousness functions. Real science and mediocre mass mind-set are located within the frame of the first question, the aim of evolutionary transhumanism is to reveal the perspectives of working means within the frame of the second (for example, with the help of system iso-functionalism principle) and even the third questions.

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[12] It should be understood that the concept of evolution is taken not in the Darwinian sense. According to Charles Darwin, an individual is not able to evolve. We speak about evolution, referring to the argument about the person by Peter K. Engelmeyer, who demonstrated at the beginning of the 20th century the inapplicability of Darwinism to the description of the person and showed that the person did not adapt to the environment, but, on the contrary, created an acceptable environment for himself. With this argument Friedrich Dessauer later built the conception of the general sense of technology as the force that changes the world. See P.K. Engelmeyer, *The Philosophy of Technique*, St. Petersburg 2013. In Russian: П.К. Энгельмейер, *Философия техники*, Санкт-Петербург 2013; F. Dessauer, *Streit um die Technik*, Freiburg in Breisgau 1959.

This task can be solved only by means of transforming the mind-set of a mass human: a society and a state consists of people, their structure and ways of interaction are defined by the interests and needs of the majority. Evolution is going to follow the principle of analogy, which is subject to self-interest and egoism, while a common mass human involved in Anti-enlightenment ideology systems, does not see the monumental history behind and the global future in front.

It is possible to change the mind-set of a mass human or to transform the content of basic metaphysical notions (death, happiness, 'I', etc.) in the Enlightenment ideology. The ability to perform self-determination while striving for high goals understood as life-determining tasks for an individual that are realised in mainstream plots of social consciousness is the foundation for transforming an individual mind-set. High goals of evolutionary transhumanism are defined by the pathos of striving for neo-mankind, i.e. for the variant of humankind in which the quality of wisdom examined by philosophers for hundreds of years characterises the absolute majority, but not the selected minority. These are the aims of cybernetic immortality, the synthesis of scientific and spiritual knowledge and the creation of social subjects capable of stopping degradation and the self-destruction of modern civilisation.

It is difficult to analyse the complete spectrum of these aims because each involves the potential for self-organisation of an individual human and manifests the evolutionary demand for the auto-communicative self-determination of an individual and a society. Cybernetic immortality, personality transfer to an alternative carrier, victory over illnesses and ageing—these are the aims, which are considered by mass consciousness in the terms of traditional religious systems or qualified as fantasy. Philosophic anthropology highlights the principle shift of qualitative boundary for human self-consciousness: philosophy of life, existentialism and postmodernism accustomed the average European to the fact that a human finds oneself as a human only in front of physical death. A great amount of literature deals with the propaganda of this doctrine although it is evident that a human in reflection finds a finite boundary, which he/she cannot overcome, where the notion 'death' is simply the part of the notion "boundary." The convergence of human and mortal boundaries is

a special case in human self-consciousness. This situation was illustrated in the middle of the 20th century by the philosophy of technology. Friedrich Dessauer made considerable efforts to clarify the essence of technology as "a real being made out of ideas through the purposeful formation and processing of naturally given resources."[13] The self-consciousness of a person is found in technical, material reflection, constantly shifting the boundaries of the possible (conceivable) in the background of the impossible (unthinkable).

When created in the real world, any technical object, whether medicine or a machine part, brings its specific "power." While some medicines can prevent an illness or death, a machine part allows the production to function ("power" in this case is certain change, a violation of the natural way of life, leading as well to the transformation of fantasy horizons, which show possibilities for new technical objects). It is important that summing up the powers of separate technical objects allow the technology to change the human world in general. According to Dessauer, the general sense of technology is that it builds the human environment, which overlaps with the natural environment and lets the person realise their human potential.[14] The human world is an artificial, technically-built environment. The sum of transformations imposed by separate technical objects within the natural environment develops into a new environment quality: a natural environment becomes an artificial one. Consequently, practical realisation of imagined forms at first in the mind and then in material objects that can be perceived, leads to the realisation of a new environment quality and modification of the world. Technology is the area in which human problems collide, i.e. the understanding of ignorance and the ways of overcoming it, meaning forms and rules of human activity dealing with natural world, the human himself (oneself) and other people. Every decision in the sphere of technology, whether it is the theory, which is logically correct when applied to an object or process, or the created technical object, influences the entire technical area in a special way and via it—the human and his environment. These changes being accumulated lead in turn to changes

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[13] F. Dessauer, *Streit um Technik*, op. cit., p. 115. German original: "Technik ist reales Sein aus Ideen durch finale Gestaltung und Bearbeitung aus naturgegebenen Beständen."

[14] Ibidem, pp. 105–108.

in scientific, political and economic spheres and influence the understanding of aims and the content of education.

Dessauer's speculation about the meaning of technology (in the context of analytical philosophy—about the aim of technology) correlates with Peter K. Engelmeyer's speculation concerning the inapplicability of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution to the description of a human being and human history.[15] People do not adapt to the environment, they change it so that it provides them with what they need. It can be applied to human beings in general, because an individual can be neither object, nor subject of evolution in the meaning of Darwin. Practical modification of the environment is the result of human self-development by means of technology. In fact, the new, which is recorded by a human within the practice of scientific, artistic and historical knowledge, is created by a human himself: new objects, new literary and mathematic languages, new value systems—in all the cases the technology means the locus of something new.

A human sees the qualitative boundary of self-reflection in a comprehensible content: the difference between people as it is fixed in the history of philosophy can be shown as the difference between comprehensible content of self-consciousness acts. The aim of evolutionary transhumanism is to reveal and show the practical means of expanding comprehensible content for an individual. This consciousness expansion, which was connected with spiritual experience over the last thousands of years, allowing the individual to overcome physical boundaries in the acts of self-consciousness and to enter the cultural space, is realised within the technical synthesis of science, spiritual practices and philosophic analysis.

Final remarks

The technical synthesis of scientific knowledge and spiritual practices is the condition, which makes evolution possible. On the one hand, scientific knowledge expands knowledge horizons based on religion. On the other hand, essential development of self-consciousness is impossible without self-rejection practices, idea serving and striving for truth. The technical realisation of cybernetic immortality

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[15]   P.K. Engelmeyer, *The Philosophy of Technique*, op. cit., pp. 91–92.

is in fact the demand for animating dead matter that reconstructs the phenomenon of technology (as craft) in its initial meaning. Technology in any manifestation is exo-somatic implementation of rational structures of an individual, which is realised in the form of an object or as an embodiment of human self-consciousness and society, showing his/her level and content boundaries. Immortality in its technical manifestation is not the profanation of sacral spiritual knowledge, but the law performing a leap in the evolution of the consciousness of humans with scientific knowledge.

Evolution is defined by the will to overcome boundaries, by techniques of nature conquering and the ability to retain knowledge about one's ignorance at any new step of learning. Evolutionary transhumanism is the ideology of New Enlightenment: a human becomes a human when he/she is capable of goal setting and goal realisation, of setting and solving problems of future, of being responsible for the future, of mobilising (conscientious attitude to one's life practices) for the sake of the future. Ideology and a self-consciousness environment create the communicative space of goal setting, determining the plots for human evolution. A human is not a slave of one's nature, prejudice and dogmas. A human is correlated with oneself and only in this correlation is it free.

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